

MEN AND MOVEMENTS

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MEN AND MOVEMENTS

**The Growth
of the
Welfare State**

BY
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HAMISH HAMILTON
LONDON

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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS WELFARE?

A FEW years ago "Mr. Flea" died. He died of frostbite in an old bath under a hedge: the sacking over his broken boots had failed him at last. He was called Mr. Flea (behind his back) by the respectably prosperous people of the respectably prosperous Hampshire towns he walked about in. He got a little money from well-wishers who put it in a box in a café for him. But he would not accept a direct gift nor even a cup of tea. He avoided all conversation: if you tried to talk to him, Mr. Flea became Mr. Fled. But there was reason to think he was far better educated than most people. (Some said he had been a school-master who had had enough of it!)

You can say he lived on charity, though he never openly asked for it. He certainly did no work for it. But neither did he cost the State a penny, except for his funeral. A scrounger? If you like. But, in one way at least, he was extremely rare. A very unusual sort of tramp or beatnik; for *they* like some comfort; tramps use "Reception Centres" at night, and some do actually work if necessary. Mr. Flea, on the contrary, had no desire for any security at all, though he could probably have worked at something or got some shelter from the State, and his notion of welfare was extremely modest.

Why haul him in here by his frostbitten heels? Precisely because he is so unusual. Ninety-nine per cent of us, even if we have no dependants, even if we are beatniks, and even in warm weather, desire more security than a few shillings for food and a hedge to sleep in. (And Mr. Flea was no longer young.)

And what do most of us mean by welfare and security of welfare? We mean that people have enough to eat and the right kind of food (or at least they think they have). We mean that they are not ill (or they don't feel ill). We mean that they have comfortable homes—homes with enough rooms and space for the family, well-built, dry, and warm in winter. We mean they have enough clothes to wear and enough leisure or spare time to rest and enjoy themselves.

That is what most people mean by "welfare". But it is important to add security, especially when people have families. You may have enough food and clothes and a home, but will you go on having them if you are ill or injured and cannot work, or when you are too old to work? If the answer is "No", your welfare may stop just when you need it most. That is why we shall say more later on (especially in Chapter Eight), on this very important thing, security.

* * *

In order to have any or all of those things that we mean by welfare, most people have always had to work. Most payment for work is called wages, and wages are paid in money. With your wages (or salaries) you then

buy the things you need for your welfare. This is true of the period of history which this book is about. It was not always like that. For instance, until about 200 or more years ago there were still farmers in this country who grew food chiefly for their own use and sold only what was left over. When people produce food or anything else that they are not going to use themselves, those things are called goods or commodities. A commodity is something people make in order to sell it. With the money they get for it they then buy different things, which other people have made.

There are also, of course, many people who don't make things themselves but sell things which others have made. They are the people who own shops or are merchants or traders of some sort. And there are the people who work in transport, whether rail or road or air. All these are necessary in order to get commodities sold. A shopkeeper's wages are paid to him by his customers for the service he provides. But most people are employed in making or producing things: it is their work which is first and foremost necessary.

We now come to what was one of the most important changes that was necessary before our modern welfare could begin. It was work in factories. This is now done with materials and with tools and machines belonging to those who own the factories. This was not entirely new; but it did not become the general rule until about 200 years ago. Why was it a necessary step on the way to modern welfare? Why could not the local "crafts-

men", as they were called, supply the people with enough clothes and furniture and so on?

Well, at certain times they did, and in certain places. But, at the best of times, the vast majority of people, both those who produced food ("agriculture") and those who made other things ("industry"), had to work so hard and for such long hours that welfare, as we know it, hardly existed for them. It is the time that it takes to make things that matters. This is called "productivity" or "labour-time". If I take two days to make the same chair which you can make in one day, we say that your productivity is twice as good as mine.

The story of modern welfare is the story of productivity. It is the story of how less and less labour-time became necessary for the making of more and more things, both necessary things and luxuries.

For this to be possible, machines had to be invented and continually improved. The sort of machinery that was necessary could not be invented and used by individuals working by themselves or in families. It was provided, on the whole, by the richer people. They also provided factories in which it could be used by large numbers of workers who thus produced far more things in a given time than they could have otherwise. In the long run, this made things cheaper to buy because they cost less in time to make.

That is what happened—in the long run. But it certainly did not happen quickly. On the contrary, it was at least a hundred years before the majority of people began to get the benefits of the far greater productivity

which all the new machines and the work in factories brought about. The great increase in factory labour and in better and better machinery is called "the Industrial Revolution", and it took place most rapidly between about 1750 and 1820. We have said something of why it was necessary. But at first and for a long time it brought hardship and misery of a new kind. It even brought more misery than there was already, if only because the population increased and so there were more people to suffer. How this happened we will come to in the next chapter.

* * *

There have been many people who have been so naturally horrified at the way the Industrial Revolution happened that they feel it cannot have been necessary. They also point to the fact that it changed the character and the whole way of life of millions of our people—for the worse. This is true. So we ought perhaps to say just a little more about why it was necessary.

Security, we all can see, is necessary to welfare. For security there must be saving. Before the Industrial Revolution the people of our land were still mainly country-people (and this was true until late in the nineteenth century). Well, why could they not save enough for all of them to become secure? The answer is that there was not enough wealth, and therefore security, to go round. Some of course were rich, and it was they who were able to save. Some of the rest had just enough to go on with (if harvests and trade were

good). But in any nation where there is not enough to go round unless productivity greatly increases, the total saving that is necessary cannot be made unless it be made by a definite class among the nation. For individuals and families will naturally try to hang on to what they have: they dare not share it. And the majority of people will not have the wealth to spend on new inventions, without which enough for all cannot be created. They will also, especially the farmers, be conservative on the subject of new methods.

The class which made the Industrial Revolution and made the necessary total saving were, in this case, those whom historians call capitalists. The ways in which they had collected enough wealth to start with were various (quite a lot was from India and from the slave trade). What matters for our history here is that they did eventually make welfare possible for others as well as themselves and that it could not have happened in any other way.

They had to be very hard indeed towards their fellow men, because they were in competition with each other. We shall come to that presently. All we are saying here is that their hardness was on the whole necessary, though terrible. History and its necessities are not pleasant, but they must be faced.

CHAPTER TWO

HOW WELFARE BEGAN

BEFORE modern industry could get started, with its greater productivity, there had to be improvements in agriculture. These had begun quite a long time before. They included new crops which could keep sheep and cattle alive and in good condition during the winter, whereas before many had not survived. There was also much improvement in cattle-breeding, both for meat and for milk. Another need was more and better cornland. But the small farmers, most of them tenant-farmers, had neither the means nor the knowledge necessary for all this. They lived from year to year, from good harvest to bad—and the bad could cause much suffering. Concentration into larger farms was necessary. So the richer landowners sought every means to get direct control of their land and develop it. This was called “enclosure”.

Now, on the one hand, this caused much distress by forcing many tenants either to leave their homes or to depend entirely on their wages as land-workers. Thus they lost their last personal bond with the land as owners of it. It also deprived them of “common lands” for their own livestock. In these and other ways it destroyed much that was good in village life.

On the other hand, there was a marked improvement

in the general health of the nation as the result of better food, especially better livestock. This explains the rapid rise in the population that took place before the Industrial Revolution had created great new towns. Another cause of that rise was certain sanitary measures such as the covering in of open drains in towns, as a result of which fewer people died young from infected water. As numbers were increasing, more food was needed. Much waste-land and forest was brought into use in ways which "commoners" and small farmers could not have developed. In many places this gave more paid employment than formerly. So there was gain for some people as well as loss.

There had also been inventions in agricultural machinery; for instance, the first efficient field-drill for seed (Jethro Tull's) early in the eighteenth century and, though much later, harvesting machines. All such inventions saved labour-time. They caused suffering and protest when they threw labourers out of work. Yet, in the long run, they are among the things which made our welfare and security possible.

The better food supply was of great importance in the long war with France between 1793 and 1815. If Napoleon had won that war, the French would probably have taken Britain's place as leader in the great industrial progress of the nineteenth century.

* * *

But terrible things happened in the making of that progress. In the later part of the eighteenth century



1. FACTORY CHILDREN SCAVENGING FOR FOOD 1840

came the new factories with their new machines (first water-power, then steam-power), especially in the cotton industry, which needed many more "hands" to work the machines. The horrible story of child-labour has

often been told. For many years, pauper children were carted off like cattle to dreadful barracks in the factory areas. Families with children crowded into the towns. Children of six or even younger were dragged daily from their slum beds at 5 a.m. to help their parents in the mills and mines till 9 p.m. or later—and even on Sundays to clean the machines. This was necessary for families to get enough wages to keep alive. So here was a new cause of larger population—parents needed children for their own livelihood. Naturally, many died and the rest grew up as stunted, miserable creatures. For more and more of the British people welfare went down instead of up, and things got better only gradually in the course of the nineteenth century.

Were the factory owners inhuman fiends? It is natural to think so. But we have to remember several things. First, some were not callous, and we are coming to them soon. Second, though they made a lot of money, many had started with little; and they were all, for the most part, in a world of ruthless competition. They, too, were struggling for security: it wasn't simple greed. Third, inventions that create wealth in the long run, together with wider welfare, don't spring out of the ground: they must be paid for in money, and risks taken.

Much wealth had to be collected before its possessors, as a class, felt safe in spending part of it on welfare. A business, then as now, "either grows or goes". So they persuaded themselves that it would be still more unkind to their workers—men, women, or children—to give them a moment's unnecessary leisure, because then

they would get into mischief, their work would suffer, and everyone would be worse off.

* * *

But several things gradually brought some degree of welfare to the workers, especially from about 1850 onwards. (1) There were the "humanitarians", men who persuaded Parliament to pass laws for better conditions. One of the most famous was Lord Shaftesbury, who, first in the House of Commons as Viscount Ashley, and then as Earl of Shaftesbury, devoted his life to the cause of welfare; and it was not his fault he did not achieve more.

(2) Many who agreed with him were themselves employers who showed that shorter hours for women and children did not necessarily mean ruin for the owners (and among these good employers were the Quakers); on the contrary, they improved output. There was Robert Owen, whose model factory at New Lanark in Scotland allowed shorter hours, infant schools and recreation, and good food and housing. But Owen was ahead of his time, and it was no good expecting most employers to do the same till they had learnt for themselves that extreme misery and fatigue are bad for productivity. There was a battle or a balance between two facts. Machines, viewed just as machines, were most profitable when kept going for many hours at a stretch. But exhausted workers got less out of the machines as the long hours went by: that was the lesson slowly learnt by the owners. It must be said, too, that

kindness was safe only in times of trade boom: at other times they naturally feared foreign competition.

(3) A third cause of some improvement may be called funk—funk felt by both employers and other better-off people when serious outbreaks of disease occurred among the ill-fed, ill-housed, and exhausted working class. They were afraid it would get into their own homes too. In so far as this was concerned with the living quarters of the poor, we shall come to it later. But, as regards places of work, the very first Factory Act, in 1802, said there should be medical attention for workers with infectious diseases.

(4) Yet another influence making for some welfare was Britain's unique position as the most advanced industrial country in the world. To be sure, great competitors appeared by the end of the nineteenth century; but by that time enormous wealth had been collected by the British manufacturing and trading classes. We cannot give here in any detail the ways in which this happened, though we shall come, later on, to some of the inventions which are connected with it. But some features are important in connection with welfare. Britain had to import many raw materials for the factories and also more food as the nineteenth century advanced with a rapid rise in population. But these imports were paid for, not only by exported manufactures but also by "services" throughout the world, such as British shipping, marine insurance, banking, money-lending, and various kinds of merchant services. By mid-century, all this began to produce a

great surplus in the hands of the wealthy. Only then did they feel secure. Naturally, they used much of it for their own comfort (which in turn was good for the makers of comfortable things). But it also meant that, together with the other influences described so far, the prosperous classes at last began to feel they could afford more than a few crumbs of comfort for "the labouring poor". As the English novelist E. M. Forster once put it, "In came the nice fat dividends, up went the lofty thoughts."

That was the position by about mid-century, at the time of the "Great Exhibition" in 1851. There was, in fact, a fifth influence on welfare, which is very important. It was self-help. Indeed, it is so important that it requires a chapter to itself, and we shall come to it in Chapter Three. But, as we are dealing in this chapter chiefly with working conditions, let us continue the story from about 1850.

* * *

In 1850 Parliament passed a very important Factory Act. Now this Act was by no means the first, and its provisions were not, on paper, greatly different from some earlier ones. But the 1850 Act put a stop to certain tricks by employers, who had, for instance, got round the ten-hour day (1847) by a relay system, keeping all workers on the factory premises, whether working or not; thus there was no real rest. There were some additions in 1853, and we can summarize the chief regulations by that date as follows:—

- (1) Work limited to 10½ hours a day for women.
- (2) Children under 18: No night-work. 9 hours a day or 48 a week. About 6 days' total holiday a year (!).
- (3) Children, 8 to 13: 6½ hours a day and 3 hours' school.
- (4) Meals must not be eaten in the factory and all employees must eat at the same time.
- (5) Some health regulations, such as ventilation; and dangerous machinery must be fenced.
- (6) Some money compensation for injuries.
- (7) Really independent inspectors, though for some time not enough of them.

Now this amount of welfare, such as it was, applied only to women and children. But in most places it applied indirectly to the men too, because not much work could be done without women and children as well. It applied mainly to the textile industries because it was there that female and child labour was most used.

Conditions in the mines were, if possible, even worse than in the factories, the main causes being the long hours underground, the terrible accidents that frequently occurred and the equally terrible illness caused by coal dust. In Scotland especially, the miners were practically slaves, being bought and sold with the pits. There was a horrifying report by a Commission in 1842; and in that year Parliament passed a "Coal Mines Regulation Act", the first of its kind in this country. It forbade all work underground by women, and by boys under the age of ten.

So much for conditions in industry at about 1850—that is, at the places of work, at the point of production. We shall say something in Chapter Nine about the places where people had to live. Naturally they were dreadful—all bunched together, cramped, ill-built, ill-maintained, and curtained in smoke and grime. The poet Tennyson called them “the warrens of the poor”, and many other writers described them.

* * *

But some welfare had begun by 1850 in places of work, and more came gradually as the century advanced. The dangers of special diseases in certain industries became a matter of concern. For example, in 1860 began a series of Bleach and Dye Works Acts, which also affected the printing trade. A little later, the making of pottery, matches, cartridges, paper, glass, and tobacco came under regulation. So did the iron and engineering industries (1867). By 1883, lead factories and bake-houses were supervised.

But among the flaws and omissions in the new laws was the fact that most of them applied only to factories or workshops above a certain size or employing a large number of workers. In London and other cities there were many small establishments, such as in the tailoring trades, which escaped the net. However, between 1867 and 1878 the small and obscure factories came under inspection, though the inspectors were at first too few.

A still worse problem was what was called “sweated labour or the sweating system”. All excessive and badly-

paid labour can of course be called "sweated"; but the term was particularly used for labour not carried on in an employer's workshop, but at home and on materials supplied by various dealers or middlemen. It was especially widespread in the clothing trade (though there were others as well). In their "warrens" these unskilled workers toiled for a pittance. Many of them were married women trying to get a bit more money than their husbands' miserable earnings; and there were also many foreigners. By 1850 some newspapers and writers, such as Thomas Hood the poet and Charles Kingsley the novelist, had begun agitating on the matter. In 1890 (forty years later!) a Committee of the House of Lords reported terrible conditions and an "Anti-Sweating League" was started. Yet it was not until 1909 that an Act of Parliament, called the Trade Boards Act, set up means for getting better wages.

Then there were the "climbing boys", of whom you may already have heard. Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* was about them. They were little boys who were forced to use their own bodies to save the chimney-sweeps the trouble of using brushes. This iniquity was forbidden by Parliament in 1840, but it was not firmly stopped till 1875 (again, under pressure from Shaftesbury).

Of domestic servants much could be said also. Of course there were good employers; but what really ended "sweated labour" in domestic service was the higher wages and jobs available in industry from about the middle of the present century. Nowadays those who

can afford servants living in the house rely to a large extent on foreign girls (pay and hours are to some extent regulated by the Ministry of Labour).

As for shop-workers—they and their champions had for long sought a weekly half-holiday before it was enforced by law in 1911.

* * *

Before closing the subject of places of work we must look again briefly at the great industries. In 1874 a Factory Act reduced to ten hours a day the work of women and young people by closing the loopholes in the Act of 1847. No children under 10 might be employed and in 1901 the age was raised to 12. By 1918 even half-time work by children was forbidden.

In the mining industry we have already taken the story to about 1850. From 1872 onwards there were a long series of Acts of Parliament gradually improving conditions and wages in the mines. In 1887 more safety rules were introduced and it was made illegal to employ boys of under twelve years of age underground. From 1908 no underground worker was allowed to work a shift of more than eight hours. In 1911 more safety regulations were made and conditions have been steadily improving ever since.

Why have we been looking at things as long ago as 1850 and even earlier? First, because it is important to understand that the great changes in ways of life, terrible though they were, were necessary to make welfare and security possible today. Second, we must

realise that those changes themselves were made possible through the labour and the suffering of several generations who hardly tasted welfare from birth to death.

In the present century conditions of work, maximum hours, health and safety regulations—in fact, the things about work and workplaces we have dealt with so far—have become more and more regulated by agreement between government, trade unions, and employers. (When the employer is the State, some interesting things happen.) They cover far too much ground and are far too numerous for us to dive into the midst of them here. In the everyday meaning of “health”, the least satisfactory of present-day work-places and work-processes are usually heaven as compared with, say, fifty years ago. To say this is not in the least to say that even the best conditions now are paradise: it is for those who work there to decide on that.

Some of you in a few years may find yourselves employed, and perhaps at high wages, at work which gives you cause for justified grumbles (and you may not quite know why!). But this book at least tries to show that in some ways you ought to realise how lucky people are to be alive and working today rather than—well, not so very long ago.

CHAPTER THREE

SELF-HELP

IN Chapter Two we briefly described four influences which, by 1850, made for some welfare—or, we should better say, for rather less ill-fare. We said there was a fifth influence, and now we will come to it. It was pressure by those who were suffering the ill-fare. This we can call self-help. There is an old saying, “God helps those who help themselves”. The working class did not wait for something to be done for them by the people above them, their employers, or other people such as Lord Shaftesbury, whose high position or ability enabled them to make a noise in the press or in Parliament. The four other influences did cause some improvement to be freely given, from motives partly compassionate, partly practical. But they would have taken still longer by themselves and would not have got as far.

This chapter is not going to give anything like a history of the trade unions; this can be found in another book in this series; but we cannot talk about welfare without saying something about the ways in which the trade unions and the whole working class movement influenced welfare, for that was their whole purpose.

Ever since there have been wage-workers they, or

some of them, have formed "unions" or associations of some sort to try to get better wages or other conditions. This is as natural and proper as it is natural and proper for employers to want to keep wages and welfare no higher than is necessary for efficient work—that is to say, as long as there are employers and wage-workers. Early in the nineteenth century (and before that) weavers and others had organised strikes with the aid of subscriptions from their members. Such activities were of course strongly disapproved of by employers and government. In 1800 they were all made illegal by the "Combination Laws," which were supposed to apply to employers as well but in practice did not; and even after the Combination Laws were repealed in 1824 there were only limited ways in which the unions could act legally. But this did not stop activity in defiance of the law. There were strikes, bread riots, demonstrations, hunger marches, petitions to Parliament, and other attempts at self-help. Sometimes they did get some ill-fare removed; but usually they were broken up by troops, even sometimes with bloodshed. One of the most violent occasions was in 1819 at St. Peter's Fields, Manchester ("Peterloo"), when the yeomanry charged a peaceful and unarmed meeting, killing several and wounding several hundred.

We mention these events because they undoubtedly had some effect on welfare. Their immediate effect was the introduction of even stricter laws against meetings or demonstrations. But they brought misery into the open and persuaded more and more people, including

the country's rulers, that some reforms must happen (or at least seem to happen) or there would be increasing disturbances. They were certainly an influence in the Factory Acts already mentioned and in later ones.

* * *

There were two things especially which the victims of ill-fare thought would greatly help them. The first was the repeal of the "Corn Laws", so that corn could be imported and bread could become cheaper. This was achieved in Parliament in 1846. The second was the reform of Parliament itself, which had been partly achieved by the Reform Act of 1832.

Now it so happened that both these measures were desired by the new manufacturing and middle classes for their own reasons. They wanted repeal of the Corn Laws because cheaper food meant that their workers could buy more bread with their existing wages, so that wage increases would be less necessary. They wanted Parliamentary reform so that they, the new wealthy classes, could be represented in Parliament. But they used popular agitation in order to scare the older ruling classes; it would probably have taken longer otherwise. Thus pressure from the working classes themselves played an important part.

These two aims need a little explanation. The Corn Laws were passed in 1815 at a time when Parliament was still dominated by the country landowners. They and most farmers wanted to keep the price of wheat at a level which had for long caused great distress. Scarcity

of wheat had been inevitable during the war with France, though in fact some got through from the Continent despite the official ban on imports. The end of the war threatened the landowners' profits. They were able to prevent repeal of the Corn Laws until 1846.

This links up with the reform of Parliament and with what is called the "Chartist Movement" (from about 1836). It was thought by the suffering classes—and by those who told them what they ought to think—that a reformed Parliament would not only repeal the Corn Laws but would help the oppressed in other ways as well. The 1832 Reform Act (as your general history books will have told you) abolished the "rotten boroughs". It gave seats in Parliament to some of the new industrial areas. But it did not give the "franchise", i.e. the right to vote at Parliamentary elections, to most of the people who were the worst sufferers of ill-fare. It gave it to the new middle classes and the factory owners. It was not until later, in 1867 and 1885, that the working class, in town or countryside, and the lower middle class were given the right to vote.

The "People's Charter" was drawn up by the leaders of the Chartists, and its famous "Six Points" were:

- (1) Equal electoral districts.
- (2) Abolition of the property qualification for M.P.s.
- (3) Universal manhood suffrage (right to vote).
- (4) Annual Parliaments.
- (5) Vote by ballot.
- (6) Payment of M.P.s.

With the exception of Points (1) and (4), all six Points eventually became the law of the land. But this was not really a victory for the Chartist movement, which died out long before the most important points became law. Though the Chartists in their heyday had the industrial masses very actively behind them, the movement petered out for several reasons after about 1850. It was divided between a definitely revolutionary wing and a middle-class "Radical" one. Also, the second half of the nineteenth century brought rather less economic suffering, for reasons unconnected with Chartism. Lastly, in so far as much suffering continued—and it certainly did—the sufferers lost faith in Parliament as a means of improving their lot.

It was not until 1906 that there was a definite and official "Labour Party" in Parliament, with 29 M.P.s (by 1914 there were 40). However, in all these matters it was pressure, self-help, outside Parliament that was a decisive influence. The pressure took many forms, ranging from strikes to tearing up the railings in Hyde Park (1866). This was long before the official Labour Party existed and long before the trade unions were strong and rich. Moreover, many of the Acts of Parliament, and some of the most important of them, concerned with improved conditions of all kinds, have been made by Parliaments which were far from having a majority of members supposed to represent "labour". Nowadays the official Labour Party (which at the moment of writing happens to have one of its turns in office) simply expresses, in a more clear-cut form, the



2. It was not until 1874 that effective legislation was introduced regulating the employment of children. This picture was drawn in 1871.

unorganised. Their victory in securing "the docker's tanner", i.e. 6d. an hour, and other demands, brought many workers into the unions. (2) They were supported by the press and £50,000 was given to them by the general public. (3) But, as with all the other cases, wide public sympathy would not have helped them so soon if they had not taken action themselves; and that action was partly the cause of the sympathy.

The examples we have given are, of course, only a small part of the story, even until about 1890, when the trade unions began to acquire the wide membership and powerful influence of the present day. Both before and after that turning-point, there were many setbacks in the struggle for welfare (such as after the 1926 General Strike, which had much middle class sympathy, especially for the miners). There are also many criticisms heard of the great trade union "bureaucracy" of today; and they are criticisms from opposite points of view, that of the employers and that of the workers themselves. (One of the things one means by a "bureaucracy" is that it is composed of people, especially at the top, whose own livelihood depends on their remaining in office. This is especially important when they cannot easily be removed or controlled by those who are supposed to have chosen them.)

* * *

The last paragraph spoke of "setbacks" in the progress to better wages and other conditions for the workers, which means for the majority of the nation.

prodded. We have, of course, said this before, in Chapter Two; but it is very important to keep it clearly in mind: new inventions have been essential to welfare.

Returning to self-help, the new inventions aided this in direct ways too. If they threw some people out of work, they also increased the value of skilled workers and therefore their bargaining power. This was especially so in engineering, following the invention and development of the steam engine. Years before the railway engine, steam-power came into use in the cotton mills and other mills and in mines for pumping out water; and of course it was the engineering industry which made and improved the engines. As the Industrial Revolution advanced, the skilled workers needed in engineering had to be intelligent, imaginative and highly trained in several different operations; some of them in fact became inventors themselves. In short, they were first-class craftsmen. Such men don't grow on every tree; they were not "expendable", as were so many in other occupations. So for them it was comparatively easy to get better wages out of their employers, however much the latter might grumble at the uppishness of their "millwrights" and other craftsmen (and grumble they did).

Unfortunately, this did not apply to the unskilled. Not only did they suffer more from unemployment, but for a long time they could not join unions because they could not afford to pay their "dues" (as union subscriptions are called). That they did begin to become organised from about 1890 was partly due to what we

have already described—the example of successful pressure by others. It was also due to its being at a time of more demand for labour in general because of an upward turn in trade.

Over and above all this, what had made unions possible, or indeed any kind of combined action, was the very nature of factory labour. Half-starved peasants or underpaid farm workers cannot easily get together to demand some welfare from landlords or employers, for comparatively they are dispersed over a far greater area. But put hundreds, then thousands, under one roof and common action, inspired by common interest, becomes possible. Factories became bigger and more numerous as new machinery was invented; so here again we see the link between inventions and self-help in the growth of welfare.

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Self-help did not end with pressure upon the employers and their Parliament by means of unions and other methods. There were two other important influences—"Friendly Societies" and the "Co-operative Movement". Both these are different from union methods in that they fairly soon became "respectable". In the case especially of the Friendly Societies, this was because it was a way in which the working class helped itself out of its own resources rather than pressing for more from outside. The members of Friendly Societies scraped together such savings as they could to put into a common pool for the help of those out of work or ill,

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for widows and orphans, and so on. In fact they were a form of insurance. There was nothing essentially new in this, and other classes were doing the same thing. The point is that it extended mutual aid downwards, though many were still too poor to join.

The services provided by the Friendly Societies were gradually aided by the State and eventually taken over by what is now called the "Welfare State", as will appear in later chapters.

The Co-operative movement is not such a simple story. It would certainly not have become "respectable" if it had not become something very much less than the idea which started it off. This is not to say it did not bring great benefits; but it is important to know how it began.

We have already spoken of the cotton-mill owner Robert Owen, who treated his workers well and still made a profit. But Owen and his friends wanted to go much further than that. They believed that true welfare for all could come only by co-operation, not competition. This means that all who work at producing the necessities of life should share in the ownership and management of the means of producing those necessities. Those means are land, tools, machines, factory buildings, etc. The idea of course does not mean that no land or houses or things to be used personally would belong to individuals or families. How much of such things would be personally owned would depend on the total wealth produced.

This idea—and to some extent its practice—was not

entirely new, but it was given a new name, "Socialism". (It is quite different from what is called "Socialism" nowadays.) It meant that there would no longer be a class of "capitalists" or any sort of people who (a) dictated how what is produced should be distributed, or (b) were in competition with each other and therefore unwilling to increase their workers' welfare unless forced to.

But Owen was bound to fail. He and others did indeed succeed in starting various co-operative enterprises; and Owen was himself surprised by the ability which ordinary workers showed in democratic management and self-government. Their hope was that they would make everybody agree with them by example: "villages of co-operation" would gradually spread and prosper. But they lacked the wealth to start with, which might have made the examples work; and by the time the Co-operative Societies did become flourishing, they had very much watered down the original purpose. In any case, if they had really got some way with that purpose, they would certainly have been squashed by the capitalists and their government.

But they did achieve a great deal for welfare—and they still do. Today they have over 13 million members. However, their practical success came from methods far less ambitious than Owen's. They made only a limited number of things themselves. But, starting with the Rochdale "Equitable Pioneers" in 1844, various Co-operative Societies grew into large and rich enterprises based on their method of trade. This was (and

is) to pay a "dividend" to members according to how much each had purchased at the Co-op. shop. Besides this, the chief benefits they have brought at various times are: (1) Educational activities. (2) Much more democratic control than can exist for either the workers or the shareholders of most enterprises. (3) Pure food, especially bread, at a time when millers and grocers were up to all sorts of tricks. In short, they have often given members and customers better value for their money.

* * *

Let us summarise this short description of how the great ill-fare of the majority of the people was lightened by their own efforts:—

(1) There were strikes, riots, petitions, which made the rulers and the more fortunate people realise that something must be done.

(2) Trade unions gradually won recognition and some welfare.

(3) Self-help was itself made easier, at least for the skilled workers, by the need for their skills, which raised their bargaining power. New inventions increased these tendencies.

(4) Any sort of combined action was easier than in former times because factory labour brought thousands together.

(5) The working class also helped itself out of its own resources through Friendly Societies and Co-operative Societies.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INSTRUMENTS OF WELFARE

SO FAR we have talked mainly about the human feelings or endeavours that tried to get welfare or to give it. It might also be called the political side of welfare. But whatever we call it, it would have been useless without material progress, without instruments of welfare. Of course, these two sides of the matter are each dependent on the other. But we must take a look at the instruments themselves because, without them, what we call welfare and security would never have been won for the majority of the people.

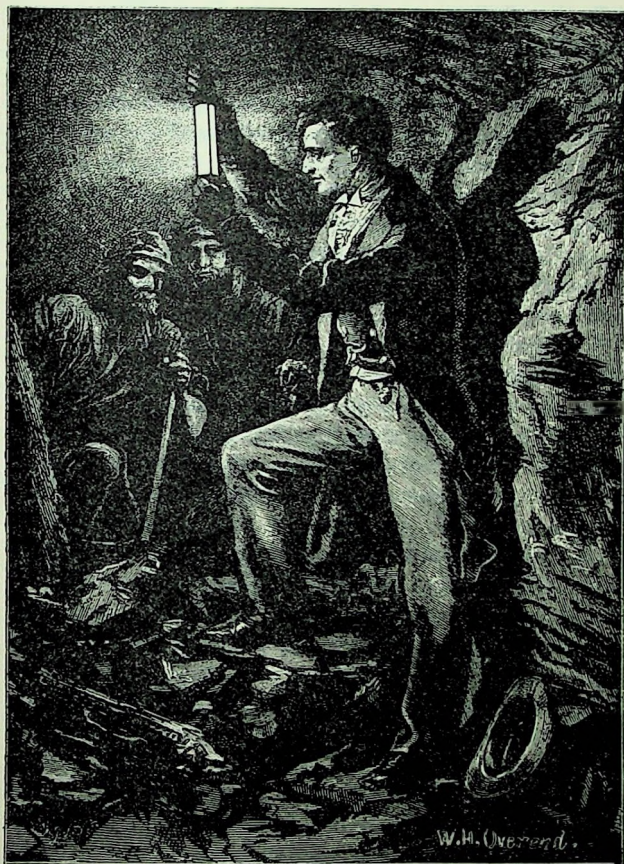
There are many wonderful inventions of our own time, but they have all grown out of those of more than a century ago. For instance, we should have neither gas for heating and cooking nor electric heating and lighting without the coal and metal industries: gas and electricity have to be conducted by pipes or wires. If we have "central heating", the same is true, whatever fuel is used. What happened 100 years ago may seem very crude today; but all the buttons and switches that now save us time—and save us thought—are possible only because of that earlier period when new contrivances appeared at a much faster rate than they ever had before.

We have seen why the Industrial Revolution had happened and why it was both terrible yet necessary.

It made comfort cheaper—in the long run. It did this first for the rich, then for the middle classes, and only slowly for the lower classes until they got better wages. Welfare, unlike water, finds the lowest level last; it is more like a feather, which hangs in the air.

Here is an example of an invention that made some work less dangerous—the miner's safety-lamp. Now coal, coal, and more coal was essential to industrial progress, for the iron industry and all the others dependent on it. But conditions in the mines were not only grinding slavery (as we saw in Chapter Two); in addition to early death or illness from coal-dust, there were quite often terrible explosions, which killed hundreds of miners. These were caused by gas set alight by the flame of the lamps that had to be used. After one such very bad disaster the scientist and inventor Sir Humphry Davy was appointed to try to make a safety-lamp, and another one was invented at the same time (1815) by George Stephenson. It does not matter which of them was first: the great thing is that it has saved innumerable lives from that time onwards.

Unfortunately, this was also an example of something else—that an invention which made work safer or easier in one way made other conditions worse! The mine owners welcomed the safety-lamp because the disastrous accidents interrupted production. But they also welcomed it as enabling them to open deeper mines, employing still more underground workers and adding to the other pains of the work. It was more than half a century later before safety regulations began to be really



5. SIR HUMPHRY DAVY DEMONSTRATES HIS SAFETY LAMP

effective. Still, none of this was the fault of Stephenson or Davy, and their lamps remained the greatest single instrument of safety in coal mines. Even the deeper mines, made possible by those lamps, brought welfare to the nation in the long run by aiding all the industries that needed coal.

Before we leave the subject of mines, we can start from there on what was the most important single invention throughout the nineteenth century and beyond—steam-power and its improvements. Those coal mines, not to mention other mines, were in constant danger not only from explosions but from flooding. This of course could—and did—drown people. One of the first uses of steam engines was to pump water out of mines (earlier it had been done by hand or by horse-power). This not only saved lives; it greatly increased the production of the mines, which in itself was essential for future welfare.

It was essential because the metal industries needed coal: charcoal was getting scarce because the wood for the charcoal was getting scarce and was also needed for other purposes (such as for building and for ships). And iron and all the metal manufactures were very important for improving productivity in most other industries. In the great cotton industry, for instance, the steam-powered machines had at first been made mostly of wood (and leather); but iron ones were more efficient. Anything that made anything else more efficient eventually made goods cheaper to buy, including all those necessary to welfare.

How did these goods arrive in the shops—and how did they get overseas, where many of the customers lived? And, before the finished goods could go anywhere, how did the coal get to the iron and steel factories and other factories? How did anything get moved quickly enough to reduce costs? This, of course, is the story of transport. It would be a long story if we were to tell it in detail, which we cannot do here. We must concentrate on its connection with welfare.

Before railways, the road system of the country had been much enlarged and improved and great new bridges built of iron. There were also canals. All this had made transport much faster for both goods and people. And then came the use of steam-power for railways. The first public one was opened in 1825, the Stockton and Darlington. Five years later came the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. At its opening ceremony, an engine displayed an unusual view of welfare—it knocked down and killed a politician called Huskisson, though he had done it no harm. This was just a signal of how almighty the railways were to become as they spread in the following years in all directions.

What did the railways do for welfare? As with roads and everything else, they eventually made many things cheaper to buy because cheaper to carry. They made it easier to feed the fast-growing towns—for those townspeople who could afford to buy enough food, which is another story. Above all, of course, the railways vastly increased business in every way. They are the chief

reason why exports of all kinds to foreign countries rose nearly threefold in value in the twenty years between 1830 and 1850. They greatly multiplied the wealth of the richer classes, thus making some welfare possible later for others, whether the rich were land-owners who sold land for railway building or were manufacturers or were those who sold railways to other lands (and those who became shareholders in railway companies, at home or abroad).

But what about the mass of the population? The railways helped unemployed workers to find work, in two ways—first, directly, in the making of them (and later as railway workers); second, to get to places where work was obtainable, often far away from where they were living. This second benefit has been very important because, except at the worst times of unemployment, people have often been unable to find work in their own locality while industries somewhere else were short of workers.

But the immediate effects were, as usual, mixed. The making of the railways gave employment to thousands of “navvies” who would otherwise have been paupers. (A “navvy” was originally a worker who dug the earth out to make canals—“navigation”.) But wages and conditions were as bad as usual. The British navvies were joined by many Irish, whose land and homes had been taken from them, for reasons we can’t go into here. As for the railway workers—i.e. drivers, guards, porters, clerks, and the rest of them—their wages were lower than in many less responsible occupations, their

hours long; and it was over eighty years before the railway companies recognised or would negotiate with the Railway Unions, following big strikes and much public sympathy.

We have lingered on the railways because they were, along with steam-power in general, the greatest vehicles of future welfare. Then of course came steam-power for ships, a great shipbuilding industry, and thereby more and more wealth for the wealthy, adding to the store of wealth necessary before some of it could be shared with the poor.

This does not mean that further inventions were not as remarkable and as necessary for bringing in more wealth—for keeping up the reserve of wealth. Such further advances were all the more necessary because, before the end of the nineteenth century, very powerful trade competitors had appeared, as in Germany and the U.S.A. But none of the great inventions of the present century would have been possible without the basis of steam engines for factories and transport alike. And, sustaining it all, coal. There is no sort of worker to whom we owe more for all we have today than the miner, and few who, until recent times, were more haunted by sudden death and crippling disease.

* * *

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the great inventions based on coal, steam-power, and metals had for many years been storing up wealth and bringing the benefits already mentioned. All the instruments of



6. A COUNTRY DOCTOR OF THE 1800s

welfare are so important not only because, by selling them, those who sold them became rich and felt secure enough to be generous; they had direct effects too. Looking almost anywhere, we can easily see this. Just think what it was like before the days of telephones and motor-cars, especially in isolated parts of the country, if you wanted a doctor urgently or other help to save a life. But it is only about eighty years since the first telephone exchanges were set up. By 1880 a telephone

exchange was operating in London for a very few subscribers. Within about five years there were over 13,000 subscribers in Great Britain. The first telephone exchange under the Post Office was at Swansea in 1881, and in 1912 the Post Office took over from the National Telephone Company.

Private motor-cars were, of course, for a long time enjoyed only by a small minority; but the introduction of electric trams in the 1890's and then of the motor omnibus (in London, 1904) helped people to get to work more quickly.

When, in 1912, the great liner the *Titanic* hit an iceberg, only about half those on board were saved, partly because there were too few lifeboats. But those who were saved owed their lives to the recent invention of wireless telegraphy, which enabled the *Titanic* to call for help. And if we look from there to all the other uses of "radio", and then "radar", in peacetime (and of course in war), the effects on safety, information, and entertainment are obvious as compared with only a generation or two ago.

Again almost at random, the sewing machine not only aided industry but lightened labour in the home as more people became able to afford one. Now, of course, there are electric ones, not to mention electric washing machines and all such things which save time in the home. Many modern gardening tools, such as motor mowers, save time at home and thus enable their owners to use the time saved by earning more at overtime away from home. With the extra money thus earned, they

can then buy more gadgets which enable them to do more overtime, which enables them again . . . This perfect circle would have filled Euclid with joy. It is officially called "leisure".

Those are just a few of the things which most people think are necessary to welfare today. They are taken for granted, but whether they ought to be is another matter.

The present point is that even the "well-to-do" were without them not so long ago. As for the "lower orders", many could find a livelihood only by being servants of the prosperous—carrying coals up long flights of stairs (no lifts), lighting coal fires in icy bedrooms (but how many in their own?), and innumerable other chores. And, if you look back only about sixty years, neither servant nor master and mistress, nor factory-hand nor farmer, had cinemas, let alone radio or TV. Were they all less happy for that reason? Whatever the answer to that question, they in their turn were taking certain things for granted. They had gas lighting, then electric light, in the houses and on the streets of cities. The gas came from coal, as did the fuel for electricity; and we have seen whose toil and suffering gave them the coal.

Among other signs of welfare, they had, for example, machine-made boots, because they were cheaper to make and to buy. It is true that hand-made boots or clothes, which the better-off still favoured, were of much better quality and fit. But it was surely better for the poor to have footwear of some sort than to shuffle about on worn-out soles or in bare feet.

There are scores of other instruments of welfare that spring to mind, things we now take for granted but which in many cases were unheard of even when your parents were children, or at least were then too costly for most people to buy. There are new fabrics and new metals, and the many uses of oil and rubber and of what are called the "by-products" of industries. We ought to speak briefly of one of them. Atomic energy is heard much of today. It is among the many things first developed for war, but "Atoms for Peace" is now a fashionable slogan—atomic ships, atomic trains and planes, atomic heating and lighting, atomic power for everything, including food preservation—and, no doubt, atomic toys.

The idea, as with everything else, is to reduce labour-time and so to reduce the cost of comfort—an excellent and necessary idea. But it ought to be recorded that there are scientists who have strong objections in this case. They say (1) that the dangers of nuclear power can never be surely removed, especially in competitive commerce, and vastly surpass all other risks necessary to progress; (2) that there are already other means for the same purposes, which could be made at least as efficient. (1) involves many "technical" points. Just one of them may be illustrated by the fact that there is a limit to the amount of radiation that the body can safely absorb, and a worker such as a meat packer may get his permissible dose of radiation at work and then absorb a lot more from the many other sources already in use. (2) The objectors claim that among the other

equally good means are energy from the tides and solar energy (already shown as possible for house heating); and these involve far fewer permanent dangers.

It is not for us to judge the purely "technical" points. But we must always remember that there are no purely technical points. As in a thousand other things, such as medicine and food production, the "experts" whom commerce and governments employ are moved by interests outside and beyond the bounds of scientific reasoning.

Of course, the objectors may be wrong. But we should never forget that experts armed with almighty power are very dangerous and have often been proved wrong.

You are still at an age when much must be taken on trust. For instance, what this book tells you! But its writer will be delighted if, as you grow older, you seek opportunities to check on every line of it. No such opportunities? Well, you ought to ask why that is so.

CHAPTER FIVE

WORK AND WAGES

BEFORE going on, we ought now to pick up one or two loose ends which have been hanging about, though perhaps unnoticed. The first is wages. When in this book we mention wages or incomes, we usually mean what are called "real" wages or "real" incomes. The point is easy to understand. Real wages mean purchasing power with any given amount of money, say £10 a week. If next year the prices of most things, especially necessary things like food and clothes, go up, that same £10 a week is a lower real wage; if prices go down, £10 becomes a higher real wage. Or if prices remain the same but one's wages increase to £15 a week, one can say one's real wages have increased by half or 50 per cent. And it can of course happen that money-wages go down, but prices go down still more. In that case, real wages would have gone up.

Another way of putting the matter is to talk about changes in "the value of money", meaning how much it will buy; and, again, we often talk about the "cost of living" and compare it at different times and places.

This has to be understood because real income is the chief thing that measures welfare. Of course, someone may be rich but be in ill-health or unhappy about all sorts of things which money can't put right. But having

enough money usually means having the sort of security which we have agreed is the most important thing about welfare. If you are rich, you may be unhappy: if you are starving because you have little or no money, you are practically certain to be unhappy.

Now historians are not quite agreed about how much real wages rose after the first half of the nineteenth century. But it is pretty certain that they did rise on the whole. Therefore welfare can be said to have risen, at any rate for all who got higher real wages. However, it was not a steady progress. Average real wages stood still or even went down in the first fourteen years of the twentieth century, again after the First World War, and were none too good on the eve of World War II. But during World War II and ever since then—so far—there is no doubt that real wages have been higher than ever before. This has been chiefly due to the demand for labour.

But we must remember three things. First, the terribly low base or average of real wages before the rise began about 120 years ago. Second, that the present level is only about twenty-five years old. Third, that the level of real wages does not tell us how many people may have had no wages to be measured, because they were unemployed.

More will be said about unemployment in Part Two. But let us briefly look here at what can happen. Two things can happen. An example of the first happened in the 1870s and 1880s, when there was what historians call "the Great Depression" in trade (though some of

your grandparents would say the 1930s were the greatest imaginable depression). Now unemployment was serious in that Great Depression; but real wages may have risen for those still employed. This was because the depression in trade brought prices down so much that prices fell further than wages. If goods are hard to sell, their price in the shops comes down.

The other thing that can happen regarding unemployment is notably different. It is happening in the U.S.A. right now, and it could happen here. In America at present there is not a trade depression and real wages are not going down, at least for skilled workers. And yet there is growing unemployment and poverty affecting millions of Americans, as the U.S. government itself admits. We cannot now go into the reasons for this except to repeat that it could happen here.

* * *

Just one thing more about money. You may have enough of it for security, but how hard do you have to work for it? It is possible that many people in the new factories long ago, before things got better, did actually earn enough to buy more than at certain times both earlier and later. But their wages per hour were so low that, as we have seen, they had to work for more than half the twenty-four hours, and their children too. And what about nowadays? We hear a lot about "more leisure", and of course it has increased. Yet in 1964 the average male worker in industry worked nearly 48 hours a week, i.e. a six-day week. This is as many hours

as in 1938. The reason for this is overtime work, and many are doing it for the sake of security. Nobody supposes most of them enjoy their work except for the money it brings. Many people say this is a very one-sided kind of welfare. It is mentioned here in passing, but only to show that money is the only simple way that welfare can be measured in the world as it is at present.

Some of you have perhaps been thinking something else again—what has been, and what is today, the *quality* of what money can buy? For you may have heard people grumbling about that. Well, it is an important question, and we will say a little about it in a later place.

PART TWO

THE WELFARE STATE

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT IS THE WELFARE STATE?

THE WELFARE STATE—you must have noticed those two words in the papers and on the air. What do they mean for you? Well, here the expression “Welfare State” is going to be used a little loosely in one way: it will include all “social services” even if some are in the hands of “Local Authorities” which are not, strictly speaking, the State. We can do this because all such Local Authorities (usually found in the Town Hall or thereabouts) got their powers at some time or other with the consent of our central Parliament and Government, and Parliament could take any such powers away. What’s more, that central authority, which is called the State, has in fact for a long time been taking over more and more matters which were at one time under local control. We are not considering whether that is a good thing or not: we are simply concerned with what the State has done to create or increase welfare.

The Welfare State did not suddenly start at a certain date or by some new kind of law. Welfare in a broad sense is supposed to be what the State is for. But even in the matter of “social security”, the Welfare State came about in bits and pieces, which were gradually added to and joined together. All the same, there was

a definite and rapid enlargement of it about eighteen years ago, the idea being to increase "social security", and for more people, and to a much greater extent than had been known before. It is this idea of welfare and its practice, since the end of World War II, that most people mean by the Welfare State.

We must be sure we understand how the State can provide what it does provide—money to the unemployed, "National Assistance", pensions, free medical treatment, free schools, and so on. The State has no income or wealth except what it gets from us. It can borrow; it can also lend; it can make a "profit" out of "nationalised" industries. But the things we are given by the State are possible mainly because the nation has been taxed. Taxes are graded according to people's incomes, and some people are not taxed at all. But whoever pays most or pays least or pays nothing, the nation as a whole is paying for any help that any of its members get from the State.

What's more, if we followed the thing out we should soon see that if everybody stopped working at producing things, i.e. producing wealth, all the money in their pockets would become useless; wealth would get less and less; so would taxation, for you can't tax what isn't there; and the only people left with any welfare would be those strong or cunning enough to grab such wealth as remained.

Now there are several ways of looking at this. It is natural to feel we have a right at least to enough to eat and to keep out the cold. That feeling is an instinct, and

without it neither we nor animals would have stayed alive on the earth. But there are those who criticise the Welfare State as making some people irresponsible: they take it for granted (the critics say) that security will be laid on. For instance, some people (it is said) can get along somehow on unemployment-pay or on National Assistance, with perhaps some casual paid work which they don't own up to. This is an "abuse" of the Welfare State because such people are being supported by the rest of us, through the State, though they could support themselves. It is important to see what the point is—living off others when you need not (though the present writer happens to believe that the Welfare State is not the real cause of such behaviour: that cause lies elsewhere).

Horried by such scroungers, you may be thinking, "Why not employ more inspectors or snoopers to see the chap isn't cheating? Why not even make the rates of State assistance so low that practically nobody will prefer scrounging to regular and above-board work?" The snags here are (1) that every additional official means more State expenditure to pay him, i.e. with our money, and (2) that these precautions may punish the innocent, the family of the scrounger, and to help the helpless is the whole purpose of the Welfare State. It is also just possible that the critics over-estimate the number of the scroungers.

But we must leave these awful problems in the air (where they rightly belong) and get on with our story, with one final word of introduction. It is convenient

to present the story under separate headings—"Education", "Insurance", "Health", etc. But it will soon be obvious these are far from independent affairs, which is why many forms of State assistance have been more and more brought together in Acts of Parliament.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EDUCATION

THE complete story of education is to be found in the book in this series, *Education in Britain*, by Michael Hutchinson. But education has such an important link with welfare that something must be said here to show that link.

In the period and conditions we are concerned with, the bare essentials of education have always and obviously been "the Three R's"—Reading, Writing, Arithmetic. And much more than that of course. But the fact remains that, by about 1850, it was still doubtful if much more than half the country's children were literate, i.e. could read and write. If we were looking at the history of mankind as a whole, we might very reasonably conclude that many peoples with no written language had been quite as happy and as healthy as we are. What's more, many of them have had quite complicated languages, which can express quite complicated and subtle thoughts and feelings, though they had no writing. But in the long run reading and writing are necessary to security, without which happiness is not surely founded. In any case, this is certainly so among ourselves.

But it had not been quite so necessary before the Industrial Revolution, for there were still ways of

earning a living, even of being a good craftsman, where the ability to read was not essential. However, when machines became more and more complicated and when instructions had to be given to more and more people, an illiterate population became a brake on possible progress. That is the strongest reason for the efforts, in the course of the nineteenth century and ever since, in the field of "popular education". For we are not concerned here with the "higher education" for the minority classes of people and their various kinds of school, which were developed as part of the welfare they already enjoyed.

But we must mention in fairness that at no time were educational opportunities confined entirely to those whose parents could buy them. There had for a long time been many "charitable" bodies and "foundations" which gave "scholarships" and other opportunities to selected children who would otherwise have lacked them. These were mostly voluntary, i.e. not State-supported schools, but founded and financed by the same sort of "philanthropists" who were trying to improve general conditions, and some of them were very fine and devoted people. There were "Sunday Schools", "Nautical Schools", "Hospitals" (not meaning just for illness), schools run by various religious bodies, and some others. But they could not touch the general mass of the people. Or at best, the more they tried, the lower the quality of what they could give. For one thing, there were not nearly enough qualified teachers (there seldom are!); those that were available were very badly



7. Sheffield in the mid-19th century—certainly not a smoke-free zone.

8. A London mews in 1910—before the days of the launderette.





9. A modern block of flats in Camberwell, London. As the price of land rises the buildings get higher and higher; but many critics regard such blocks as these as "human bee-hives".



10. WORKROOM OF THE BROOK-STREET RAGGED SCHOOL 1853

means of "Adult Education" of today. But these touched only a fringe of the masses, and in any case we are concerned first and foremost with the children.

So back to the all-important places of labour. These were all-important so long as child labour lasted. The employers were in a dilemma. Even they did not expect a child to be in two places at once. Every hour spent learning the alphabet meant an hour less in the workshop, and in Chapter Two we noted that the 1850

Factory Act compelled three hours' school a day for eight-years-olds. On the other hand, if they didn't learn the alphabet they would be much less efficient workers when they grew up.

The trouble was that the first methods used hardly taught anyone the alphabet, let alone arithmetic or anything else. The general idea was certainly ingenious and was started by a very ingenious man, Dr. Andrew Bell. He had a rival in Joseph Lancaster. Their rivalry was largely because Bell was an Anglican parson and Lancaster was a Nonconformist (a Quaker). But the methods were much alike—a mass-produced Three R's, taught by using "monitors", who were children themselves. They were one lesson—or less—ahead of the general mass of children, and that mass was sometimes several hundred in one hall. It was divided into small groups whose monitors shouted or chalked up spellings and bits of arithmetic that were forgotten (or misunderstood) as soon as seen—if, indeed, seen or heard at all in the general fun and tumult. You may think you can make a noise *and* learn enough to go on with: those children could have given you a long start, and very few of them learnt anything except how to make a bigger and better noise. This was far better for them than the rods of the factory overseers, but not exactly the education intended.

In fairness, however, we ought to note that it did sometimes work in amazing fashion when smaller numbers were involved. There was a young hero named Lewis Warren, aged 13, trained by Dr. Bell at his school

at Swanage, who was sent to teach at a Whitechapel school. After some trouble to start with, it was reported that:

“Lewis Warren . . . carries authority with him, and makes boys twice his own size stand in awe of him, but out of school is as much a child as any of them.”

But there were few Lewis Warrens. Most monitors were either unheeded or bullies; and, as already noted, most teachers of any age were in need of teaching themselves: some applicants for training as teachers even had to learn to read first. That was the state of welfare in elementary education until towards the end of the nineteenth century.

* * *

The disadvantages of having so many people unable to read and write worried not only philanthropists and religious teachers. The Top People of the land, many sorts of employers, and all those concerned with making and enforcing regulations, found it very inconvenient in dealing with people who could not even sign things like marriage and birth registers. And of course illiteracy increased the ill-fare of many who could not get jobs they might have done well in.

By 1850 the State had begun to take several steps. It gave grants of money to certain educational bodies, such as “The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church” and to the “British and Foreign School Society”. Those two are often called “the Great Societies”. There was one

difference between them which for a long time was very important. The National was Church of England; the British and Foreign was Nonconformist but gave "undenominational" religious teaching, meaning it taught Bible-reading without using it for the particular doctrines of any of the Churches. But nothing like "Christian unity" was on anyone's programme, and the Church of England would not allow its children to attend the neutral schools. As the Nonconformists felt the same but were too numerous to be forced into conformity, the State had to walk warily.

The conflict was bad for State-aided education in several ways. If children whose parents were of different Churches had to go to separate schools, this meant separate buildings. Buildings were in short supply anyway. So were qualified teachers. Schools under the direct management of the State or of Local Government would thus have needed less money and human and material resources. This is not said as an argument for standardised State control of education or of anything else. But here we are talking about elementary or "primary" education—roughly, the Three R's—as it was in the last century. As religious differences don't mean teaching different alphabets or multiplication tables (which would have been fun when the pupils grew up!), those differences simply meant delay in getting a much-needed national elementary education system. This did not come until 1870.

Meanwhile, the money granted by Parliament to the voluntary religious Societies was only for building

schools and was not nearly enough. Inspectors for all such schools had already been appointed (1839). But none of this got enough children into any sort of school nor did much to improve the teaching.

* * *

Then came the very important Education Act of 1870. This was the first real Education Act. It left a lot undone; but it created a very important principle, which came to be more and more enforced in practice. This was universal and compulsory primary education between the ages of 5 and 10. (Free education followed in 1901 for parents too poor to pay anything.) It greatly increased State aid for the voluntary schools. For the first time, it established national schools, called Board Schools. They were called that because they were managed by School Boards, who were people chosen by local Councils. The money came from local taxation ("Rates"). Teaching success was tested by examinations, though these were often unsatisfactory for a number of reasons.

Here we must note that State control of schools has always taken place through local government of some sort. It is true that, since the national "Board of Education" was replaced by the Ministry of Education in 1944, the Minister has far-reaching powers, and there are innumerable regulations; but it is still local authorities who manage local (or regional) schools. We need not go into all the changes which have been made at various times as to what local authorities had these

powers. There were, for instance, no County schools at first because there were no County Councils until 1888. And in 1902 the School Boards were replaced by "Local Education Authorities" (L.E.A.s for short). These are County and some Town Councils, whose members have offered themselves to the public for election (like Members of Parliament). In turn, the Council choose some of their number as an Education Committee which then advises the whole Council.

The essential thing is that since 1870 some Government authority, State or local, has filled the gaps left by the voluntary or charitable organisations.

The Act of 1870 settled the general shape of compulsory schooling. It did something else of equal importance for welfare, which is a vital example of the links between different kinds of welfare. It automatically struck at child labour, at least below the age of 10. Of course, some children could be concealed from the School Attendance Officers, as could some workplaces; and in any case the prohibition of any child labour below the age of 12 did not come until 1901. But the 1870 Education Act greatly diminished child labour. When the 1918 Education Act made the school-leaving age 14 (and also abolished half-time schooling), this long, long atrocity was ended.

* * *

It is easy to see that compulsory education, free when necessary, was a great step in welfare because it brought some security in the form of earnings to many who

would otherwise have been less well paid or not paid at all. But why leave school at 10? Why, for that matter, leave school at 14 (which became the lowest age for leaving in 1918)? Or at 15 (the lowest age since 1944)? Here we come to "Secondary" education (which, under the 1944 Education Act, begins at 11). The name was invented for schooling that gives you more information and training than is absolutely necessary for earning a living somehow.

The State (out of taxation of course) has, in the last half-century or more, taken a series of steps to give everyone at least the opportunity to have more than an elementary education. There had always been several kinds of "voluntary" schools, Grammar schools and others, which had provided Secondary education. The State, as we have seen, had aided them; but they could not possibly provide for all who ought to have stayed longer at school if their parents could have let them. (There were also, of course, the "Public Schools", meaning Eton, etc., for the middle and upper social classes; but these neither needed State aid nor gave free education except to selected "scholars".)

The chief reason why the State has more and more encouraged and paid for Secondary and then "Further" education is that industry and commerce require it. Again we see how one kind of welfare leads to another. Inventions in industry and commerce which saved manual labour caused, at the same time, more demand for clerical workers—for draughtsmen, bookkeepers, secretaries, typists, and others needed in the growing

complexity of management. For such work, elementary schooling was no longer enough.

Unfortunately, the old enemy—unemployment due to trade depression, has caused setbacks. For instance, the 1918 Education Act intended a far greater extension beyond the age of 14 than actually happened; for the trade “crises” in the 1920s and 1930s caused State aid to be cut down. There were two ways of looking at it. (1) If you can’t find jobs by learning more at school, why stay longer at school? Or (2) if you can’t find a job if you do leave school at 14, why *not* stay at school! At the times of trade depression the first way won.

The fact that quite a lot of parents have wanted their children to start earning as soon as possible, to make the family income sufficient, has also played its part. They may feel like saying to the State “You may be paying for their schooling, but will you pay us what the family loses by their not earning?” This, of course, takes us into what, and how much, the Welfare State is willing to do for poverty (see the next chapter).

However, great though the setbacks have been at times, Secondary and “Further” education have gradually come to far greater numbers than about sixty years ago when the State began trying hard to provide it (with the 1902 Education Act). The 1918 Act did more still. The 1944 Act is the basis of all State-provided and State-aided education today. It did away with all L.E.A.s which had provided only Primary education, thus trying to simplify changes in school life. The Act also promotes “Further” education for

all who desire and qualify for it after they are 18.

Now even if there were space in this book, it should be unnecessary to set forth what is meant by the names of the different sorts of Secondary School and of the varieties of Further education beyond.

As to how one should be taught, what sort of exams there should be, and so on, one thing should be said here. The whole thing is pondered and publicly debated with unceasing care and anxiety by everyone concerned with education; and the very fact that they don't all agree is a good sign. So don't shoot the teachers: it will only land you in bigger classes with fewer teachers and diminish your own security.

* * *

This chapter has stressed that the chief welfare given by State-aided education is the welfare of security that comes from one's being qualified to earn a living. It must therefore be equally stressed that this is not the sole purpose, nor the whole substance, even of Primary education, let alone what follows it. There is the fun and the wonder, at all ages, of learning about the world, of learning how to be one's own teacher when old enough, and, above all, of learning how to do and to make things for their own sake as well as for security. But security, freedom from want, is the only hard and measurable welfare in our present world; and it is the only hard and measurable reason for the Welfare State.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOCIAL SECURITY

AT the beginning of Chapter One we introduced a very unusual person, "Mr. Flea"—unusual because most people desire far more welfare and security than he did. The State and the prosperous part of the nation woke up to that truth after a long period during which they seemed to assume that most people, young or old, were as tough as Mr. Flea. Well, no, that's not quite fair: it is truer to say that they supposed most people were so soft that if you gave them more than just enough to keep them alive, they would not want to get more by working for it. The State and its more fortunate citizens could not, at certain times, deny that there were many who simply could not find employment and were therefore desperately poor unless helped either by the State or by other "charity". But they were afraid that all such help would make people lazy when chances of work appeared again. They even said the country could not afford to give more help. If forced to admit that those arguments were pretty weak, they fell back on "the survival of the fittest"—some people were obviously doing well even at the worst times, which showed that only they were fit to survive!

There was, to be sure, a "Poor Law". There had been

one of some sort for several centuries, because starving men can be dangerous unless you shoot them like wolves. The Poor Law of the nineteenth century—and, indeed, until 1930—was based on an Act of Parliament of 1834 which put the most needy people into workhouses managed by Boards of Guardians. But in order to be “eligible”, people had to have less income than the lowest wage paid by any employment. Husbands were separated from wives, children from parents. How they were treated is shown in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* and other accounts at the time. The work in workhouses was as useless as that of criminals in prison, and the inmates got practically no pay except bad and inadequate food.

This went on until the Guardians were abolished in 1930 and other means adopted. But the second half of the nineteenth century was rather better, mainly because unemployment was less for much of the time and because average real wages were higher (see Chapter Five). There were, however, the years of “the Great Depression” (see Chapter Five) and, in the present century, nearly twenty years of increasing unemployment until it was relieved by re-armament in about 1938 and then by the war in 1939.

But relief by war or preparation for war did not, before the present century, do nearly enough to bring security against unemployment or the various other causes of poverty. Nor do they now, which is why we now have “Social Insurance” intended to cover every personal and family emergency “from the womb to the

tomb", as it is called. Before 1948, when the National Insurance Act of 1946 came into force (with several other Acts of Parliament all connected with it), there had been (as we shall see) an important Act in 1911. But "social insurance", even so, had been patchy and incomplete until 1948. There had, however, been quite a lot of insurance among all classes, except the very poor; and we must pause here to be sure we understand what "insurance" is and does.

* * *

An insurance scheme may be run by a private insurance company (and is then called commercial insurance, because it makes a profit for the company) or by a "Friendly Society" (see Chapter Three) or by the State. Friendly Societies are not nearly so important as they were before the 1946 National Insurance Act. So we will look only at the other two kinds. We are not concerned in this book with commercial insurance except that it shows what is called "insurance" in its simplest form. You pay annual sums to the company (or weekly or monthly: it doesn't matter). These are called "premiums" (in the case of commercial insurance), and they insure that you or your family get certain payments if certain things happen. You can insure against death (called, rather oddly, "Life Insurance") or against heaps of other misfortunes or losses. But you don't get something for nothing unless the misfortune happens so soon after you became insured that the "benefit" exceeds the premiums you have paid. If that happened

in most cases of insured persons, the insurance company would be broke, and it insures *itself* against that happening by charging premiums based on probabilities. Otherwise, the thing would be charity, not insurance.

That is how ordinary insurance works. State insurance is not quite so simple. The weekly "contributions" (not called "premiums") certainly come out of our pockets (when we are old enough to pay them), and they are compulsory; and employers pay part of the contributions too. But the State also contributes. If it did not, then either our contributions would have to be higher or there would be higher taxation, and there would be heated argument about who should pay higher taxes. As we saw in Chapter Six, the State's income, though enormous, depends on taxation of some sort.

In fact, the "Benefits" given by the Welfare State since 1948 are paid for by a mixture of taxation and "insurance". For instance, the "National Health Service" is not provided solely by our insurance contributions. "National Assistance" is not under the National Insurance Act at all, nor are Family Allowances. But they come under one or more of the Acts of Parliament, passed between 1945 and 1948, which set up the Welfare State and Social Security as they are now; and the National Insurance Act is the most important one.

At this point we may as well name the chief benefits given by National Insurance and the other Welfare

Acts: Medical treatment; Family Allowances; various payments for Unemployment, Sickness, Accident, Industrial Injury, Disablement; Maternity and Death Grants; Retirement Pensions (earlier called Old Age Pensions); Widows' Pensions.

Medical treatment is undoubtedly the benefit most often used. Which of the others comes next depends on one's individual fortunes. Maternity happens quite often, and always has, in order that there shall be people to tax and insure. But one can have only one widow, though she of course may do it again; and death grants can be paid only once for each person.

Now there are many arguments about how far the money benefits of the Welfare State do achieve their purpose of "freedom from want" in particular cases. We cannot examine this here. By contrast, there is the question, "Should people who already have ample means be able to get free benefits?" The short answer is that they have paid their contributions, which are compulsory; but, again, we must leave the matter there.

Whatever we think about those last two questions there is no doubt at all that the years since 1948 have seen a great advance on such security as there was before that. But again we must remember that money is the only simple way of measuring welfare. If you are in trouble, the State either lets you have back some of the money which you have paid in taxation or insurance, or it lets you do something free (such as being ill). But, for those services, somebody somewhere is being paid in money (doctors, nurses, hospitals, and a vast

army of "civil servants" who, in this country at least, are terribly stuffy about taking bribes).

* * *

As has been said already, the Welfare State and Social Security did not suddenly appear about eighteen years ago. But, until that time, such welfare as did exist was disjointed and very uneven. We have already touched on the Poor Law, which was not changed in principle for nearly a hundred years before 1930, though less harshly operated in practice. Now there are two ideas or principles which people have asserted—the *duty* to work and the *right* to work. Please notice two things. First, those two principles need not be opposed to each other: work may be both a duty and a right. Second, the right to work really means the right to livelihood or sustenance. It means of course paid work, because most people need paid work to keep them alive. We may work very hard in our spare time at something that gets us no money; but to do so is neither a duty nor a right from the point of view of the Law.

But the two ideas, duty to work and right to work, did seem to be at loggerheads for a long time. This was because the right to work—or to support if work can't be found—has been fully accepted only quite recently. The official view and the law of the land asserted the duty to work (at all events if you need money) but were not too keen about the right.

This shows itself over and over again. Rather naturally, it was most noticeable at the worst times of

unemployment. The first National Insurance Act, in 1911, disqualified anyone from receiving assistance who had "refused suitable work" or "was not genuinely seeking work". That sounds reasonable. But the idea of "suitable" can be used in a very harsh way, and it sometimes was. It may, for example, involve separation from wife and children. When unemployment was becoming worse in 1930, this ground for refusing unemployment assistance was removed.

"Unemployment Assistance Boards" were started in 1934 for those not insured and for those who could not live on the rates of insurance paid. But a "Means Test", based on family income, continued. It could happen, and it did happen, that families were disqualified from help until they had sold all their belongings except the barest necessities: a bed counted as necessary, an easy chair perhaps, a piano certainly not. ("National Assistance" today still requires some Means Test. This is unavoidable. It would be absurd if Lord Beeching or the Beatles could just march in and say they were hard up.)

Looking again at the 1911 National Insurance Act, it was a distinct improvement on previous State help, but very incomplete. It insured only about 2½ million workers because far too few occupations were included. The numbers insurable gradually increased after World War I, but the money obtainable remained in many cases below the minimum necessary for health and security. The hard evidence on this will appear in our next chapter.

Before the Act of 1911 the bits and pieces of a Welfare State had been growing, but like a jigsaw whose pieces don't fit or simply aren't there. There were "Workmen's Compensation" Acts, the first being in 1897. These gradually brought some security to workers who were injured through the negligence of employers or foremen. But at first only the most dangerous trades were included, and not diseases due to the nature of the work itself.

But throughout the history of Workmen's Compensation there has often been a struggle between the worker claiming compensation on the one hand and the employer (or the State under National Insurance) on the other. It is natural that each side suspects the other of cheating, as to the cause or the time of the injury or disease. One need not suppose that every claim is an honest one, but it is obvious which side suffers more if the claim is not allowed. Until the last war, medical examinations of claimants contained many traps for them. A dispute could go to a "Referee", but not the sort of Referee you can safely throw rude things or even rude words at, however unfair his ruling might seem.

We have noted already that the Victorian Poor Law remained the same in principle from 1834 to 1930—the workhouse. But some efforts were made to keep down the numbers in workhouses by "relief works", i.e. road-making and so on, under Local Authorities. These efforts began soon after 1900; and in 1909 the first Labour Exchanges were set up. The purpose of these

offices was to gather information about employers needing workmen and about workmen seeking employment and so help the one to find the other. Today they are called Employment Exchanges.

Finally, there are the Old Age Pensions, about which we hear so many complaints. These have always been of great interest to people of all ages, for if your grandparents received no pension from the State, it would be the responsibility of your parents to look after them. The Law does not forbid families to neglect Grannie as it forbids them to neglect children; but most people would rather Grannie had a little food and comfort. The State was, as usual, slow to help. In 1908 pensions were granted to those over 70 if they had no other support. Today's Welfare State gives every insured person a "Retirement Pension" even if he or she is a millionaire. There is no Means Test unless the pensioner is earning something, when some deduction is made from the pension. Unfortunately, the majority of old people own far less than a million farthings. There are probably at least 2 million old people who are very poor. More than $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions of them have to take "National Assistance" as well as a pension (though many are too proud to claim it). However, the present law is a vast improvement on the care of the old before 1948.

* * *

From a good deal in this and other chapters you might get the impression that most people who have

enough or more than enough welfare care nothing about the fate of the rest. It might also seem that most of those elected to Parliament don't care either. But it is not quite so simple as that. We most of us see what we want to see and not what might make us uncomfortable. And most people just have not got time to notice "how the other half lives". It is natural and very necessary that "charity begins at home"; there are also many reasons why it so often stays there.

CHAPTER NINE

PUBLIC HEALTH

WHAT is "Public Health"? What is it as compared with private health (or ill-health)? In the long run, of course, there is no dividing line. But governments regard some diseases, however serious they may be to the sufferer, as being our own private business. You can nowadays have them treated free by the "National Health" Service; but that does not usually bring in the "Public Health Authority". You can have the sniffles (sometimes spelt "nasal catarrh") without being compelled by any inspector to stay indoors. Even if the sniffles choke you to death and there is a public "inquest", the "Medical Officer of Health" will not be interested unless quite a lot of other people are found to have choked to death. You may even spread your sniffles on to other people. The sniffles may be "catching" or "infectious", but they are not usually the sign of a "killer disease". In fact, if they get you off a few days at the treadmill, they may do more good than harm: many people in fact might get the willies without them (or so some doctors say).

But suppose you bring home the least spot of typhoid fever from the supermarket or get any other sort of serious illness which may not only kill you but cause an "epidemic". (An epidemic means illness which is both

dangerous and very catching and has in fact been widely caught.) In that case the Public Health machinery of the Welfare State will get off the mark with the speed, if not quite the noise, of a "ton-up" motorbike.

Actually (as we shall see later) the Authorities are not interested only in such extreme public dangers. But the examples we have given are meant to show the general difference between private and Public Health.

* * *

It should hardly need saying that the conditions following the Industrial Revolution were extremely bad for the health of millions, whether thought of as private or public. In this chapter we are concerned chiefly with the public effects. There had of course been terrible plagues before that, like the Black Death (1348) or the Great Plague (1665) in the reign of Charles II. But the chance of even a milder plague of some sort becoming epidemic was a danger which increased with the growth of more and greater towns.

The immediate causes of such outbreaks are now known to be various kinds of "bacteria" or "germs" (and their larger carriers, such as some flies). In turn, these germs come from dirt; and one of the best ways of encouraging them is not to have safe sanitary arrangements. Further, the supply of drinking water may be unsafe. Considering the crowded and insanitary conditions in which most of the poor had to live after the Industrial Revolution, the marvel is that serious epidemics were not more frequent.

Here, as with everything else, welfare was slow in coming. Even so, it must not be supposed that "Public Health" started from scratch at some definite time. Long before the nineteenth century there had been regulations made in Parliament about sewers; there was a "Law of Nuisances", an early attempt at enforcing some measure of public hygiene; and (as was mentioned in Chapter Two) open drains were already being covered in the eighteenth century. Long before anything much was known about bacteria, it was obvious that plagues had something to do with dirt.

In passing, it should be said that improved sanitation had overcome the worst of the infectious diseases *before* the germ theory and all sorts of disinfectants, and then "antibiotics", had come into general use. Among those who have pointed this out is Dr. Dubos of the Rockefeller Institute in America. He is one of the leading germ specialists or "bacteriologists" of the world.

Now it would take a whole book, and a longer one than this, to give even an adequate sketch of the last hundred years' developments in Public Health. This is not only because it has been so mixed up with other matters, for that is true in all matters of welfare. It is also because it has been mixed up in a still more complicated and changing way. For those reasons, only a few landmarks and general observations will be given here.

There are three main reasons for the complexities. First, Public Health, even more than most things, has

come up against the question of central versus local government. Second, the history of that question has itself been a history of complicated new laws and rearrangements of old ones. Third, Public Health Laws are naturally mixed up with the matters of Housing and of Town and Country Planning.

On the first point, i.e. the powers of local government, it became apparent to reformers that more central regulation of Public Health was advisable than, say, in Education. It was bad enough to have children who could not read and write because, perhaps, neither local authorities nor voluntary bodies could find the money without State assistance. It was still worse if people got dangerous diseases because of poor sanitation or rat-ridden slums. At once we see the links with housing, the location of new industries, new towns, and so on. Which is why we have today huge and intricate gear-boxes under the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the Ministry of Health. Their cogs overlap and intermingle, and the gears sometimes grind: it is a marvel that they do not grind more. All this is inevitable if our present way of life is to go on.

Part of the trouble with Public Health before the Welfare State was pieced together was that Acts of Parliament were passed which "enabled" or permitted local authorities to do this or that but did not make them do it. Some local authorities were corrupt or lazy even when they could have got money from the State. Sometimes things were tightened up, and then became slack again.

Between 1831 and 1865 there were several outbreaks of typhus and also of cholera, a disease that is caused by polluted drinking water. The authorities now became alarmed and appointed Sanitary Commissions to report on the situation. One name in particular must be mentioned here, that of Sir Edwin Chadwick (1800-1890). He was a bureaucrat of genius, at least so far as the thoroughness of his plans went. Along with some distinguished doctors, he reported on the insanitary conditions among the working classes. Chadwick at that time was Secretary of the Poor Law Commissioners; but he saw that money given to the poor simply "went down the drain" if the absence of proper drains made the poor too disease-ridden to work. Under pressure from him and others, a Public Health Act in 1848 set up a General Board of Health in London with wide powers to supervise local Boards. But when, ten years later, the scare had died down, the General Board had its powers transferred to the Home Office, and supervision slackened off. That is just another example of a rise and fall in welfare. There were no great nation-wide improvements until the 1870s; conditions varied greatly in different places. A Ministry of Health, separate from the Home Office, did not come until 1919.

Meanwhile, however, sanitation gradually improved, and the great epidemics grew less. This was not due simply to cleaner streets or to more water-closets being put into existing buildings (this was rare). It gradually came to the notice of Parliament and people that the

existing buildings of the mass of the poorer classes could not be made sanitary as they were. A whole string of Acts of Parliament, from about 1850 onwards (in which Lord Shaftesbury again played a part), aimed at new and better buildings. The names and the special targets varied—for instance, the “Labouring Classes Lodging Houses Act” in 1851, an “Artisans’ and Labourers’ Dwelling Act” in 1868. The 1875 Public Health Act decreed some new minimum standards. There was a Rent Restriction Act in 1915, when war, as always, had made housing even scarcer than usual, and a Housing and Town Planning Act in 1919. There were also Acts concerned with overcrowded dwellings. The great Housing Act of 1957 brought together and added to most previous laws.

To examine these events in any detail is impossible here. Much in these laws was very inadequate in various ways. For instance, new and better houses are not a very great advance if (despite Rent Restriction Acts) only a minority of workers can afford them. Moreover, there is, today, a great deal of public concern and official Reports about the tens of thousands of homeless families in London and other cities, and about the behaviour of landlords. There are still not nearly enough dwelling-houses, despite all the new blocks of flats; and for that reason many health regulations cannot be enforced in many great towns. But all the same, and not forgetting the terrible slums that still exist, the average state of dwellings in respect of health is much better than before the last war, let



11. LORD SHAFTESBURY EXPLORING THE SLUMS OF LONDON 1840

alone before 1919. Which, of course, only shows the degree of ill-fare before that.

Naturally, each political Party claims to have done better when in power than its rivals in the matter of housing (and in everything else). It is not this book's business to judge those claims, which would anyway require many more words. But duty compels a word of warning: remember that all figures, and arguments

arising, are likely to be selected with an eye to votes. In the long run it will always be the People, not Authority, that gets—or fails to get—what it needs. And do not set much store by Party-names. The Russians, for instance, have a one-party State which calls itself “Communist”, having destroyed every condition for communism (desirable or not) as understood by the first authors of that name.

* * *

There are of course many things which come under “Public Health” besides drains and dwellings. A list of them would be a long one. They include, for instance, the provision of maternity wards (see Chapter Eight) and connect in other ways with the “National Health Service” and the Welfare State in general. The present laws also have brought up to date various earlier “Foods and Drugs Acts” and added to them. Their enforcement is in the hands of Medical Officers of Health and inspectors, who are appointed by local authorities but with the approval and overall control of the State, especially the Ministry of Health. For all practical purposes, all regulations and management are now standardised throughout the country; and there is no question today of one local authority being able—or wanting—to be slack in matters of Public Health, nor of any official being bribed into slackness by local food providers or landowners, which was the case at some earlier times.

But even the Welfare State has its limits. It can make

laws about "clean food" and do its best to enforce those laws. If something does get past it which starts an epidemic or might do so, it can forcibly isolate the patients, hunt the source of infection, and so on. But it cannot ensure that people make and consume the right kind of food (whatever that may be). For that reason our next chapter will take a look at food in the history of welfare.

CHAPTER TEN

SOME THOUGHT FOR FOOD

OUR very first chapter named enough food as the first essential of welfare. For if anything is certain it is that if we have no food we shall die. It is equally certain that if we have just enough to keep us alive, but not enough for health and comfort, we hardly have welfare. There is something else practically certain: at any rate all historians are agreed on it. It is that large numbers of people, at times the majority, were half-starved until quite recently in this country, let alone elsewhere. This is simple and crude starvation. Unfortunately, it is not the only kind of bad feeding; but we must consider it first.

In 1845 wages—and real wages (see Chapter Five)—were probably at their lowest level for a century back. Some historians think that if the Corn Laws had not been repealed in 1846 (see Chapter Three), bringing down the price of bread, there would have been revolution because of the widespread starvation. This may be doubtful. At all events, starvation became less from that time onwards. But, for at least the next 100 years, there was evidence of starvation among many. A number of expert investigations were carried out, either set up by governments or at any rate made by people whose

conclusions have never been seriously disputed. Here are just two of them.

(1) Charles Booth's survey in the 1890s of "Life and Labour of the People in London". This concluded that about a third of all Londoners were half-starved (and of course living in conditions of general squalor). The wages of those in employment simply could not get them anything like a decent living, and of course many took to crime. Other enquiries in other cities and towns at about the same time produced much the same picture.

(2) In the 1930s there were millions of unemployed and great "hunger marches" were organised. Several careful and scientific enquiries concluded that unemployment was not the only cause of hunger: average wages of the employed were too low for a sufficient diet after paying for housing and clothes, etc. Four and a half million people were very seriously starved, and these included at least a fifth of the country's children. Further, a heavy majority of the nation lacked one or more essentials of a proper diet in varying degree.

Looking back again about sixty-five years, those in authority were alarmed about this sort of thing when there was war. When war (in the case of this country) was still conducted with small professional armies, it did not matter so much. Even so, recruits for the South African War showed serious physical weakness. But the situation became still more apparent when it was necessary to introduce large-scale conscription in World War I. It is a miracle that so many endured the terrible

trench warfare and with such heroism. Well, army food is not ideal, but it is better than much of civilian food.

We have seen how the Welfare State and high wages have greatly reduced crude starvation. Unfortunately, food is not so simple as that—or rather, our food is not.

* * *

There are two other kinds of bad feeding besides starvation, and they often occur together. First, there is feeding which is ill-balanced: it may be lacking in something needed for good health, though it may have too much of something else. There are many ways in which that can happen. In such cases we may not feel hungry; we may not even feel ill, or only sometimes or in small ways. But we do not really feel well. This state of feeding is called “malnutrition”, which means bad feeding, not simple starvation.

The medical experts who study these things are called “nutritionists” or “dieticians”. They are certainly not all agreed about what is the perfect diet (if there is one). But it is fairly true to say they are agreed that many of us are a long way from having it, even with high wages and plenty of food of some sort; also that some peoples in the past (and some still today) were nearer to it than we are. It is quite true to say they are agreed that many kinds of malnutrition were widespread during the time that welfare was rising in other ways.*

* Great care has been taken in this chapter to rely only on authorities who are within the fold of the “orthodox” medical establishment: e.g. (*inter alia*) Sir Jack Drummond’s *The Englishman’s Food* (1957 edition).



12. A hold-up at Waterloo station during the rush-hour. This is just one aspect of the price we must pay for the highly centralized city life which forms the basis of our society today.

The second kind of malnutrition comes from something that has for ages been called "adulteration". It means the putting into food of all sorts of chemicals which natural food does not possess. But before saying a little on either sort of malnutrition, it must be understood that the last thing that any doctors want is to turn people, young or old, into "food-faddists". But there seems little danger of that: something very different is happening. Though the warnings of nutritionists quite often appear in the daily papers, how many people read them? What does happen is that people feel unwell, and the causes may be partly bad feeding. They often go off and get drugs, from either the chemist or their doctor; and many modern drugs are officially admitted to do harm as well as good. The consumption of medical drugs is enormous. If this is necessary, it hardly shows a high degree of welfare in the matter of health. For there have been, it so happens, quite a few peoples of the world who have been very healthy, and with only simple medicines, if any; and by no means all of them have been "savages".

It is, of course, true that, since the Welfare State developed, the health of the nation has greatly improved. For one thing, people live longer, and fewer die in infancy. But this is largely because most people have more food: there is far less simple starvation. Because more people have the money to buy food it does not follow that its quality is all that better. It is quite likely that the food, at least in the countryside, was in many ways better 200 years ago—for those who could get it.

It is the townsman's food that is most in question; and we are all rapidly becoming townsmen, in respect of food and everything else.

* * *

The amount of malnutrition, not crude starvation, which has existed at various times has varied greatly, so has the kind of malnutrition. Of the many kinds of food involved, let us notice here only two—bread and sugar. Briefly, majority opinion is that wholemeal bread (when it is genuine) is better than white. And this is one of the cases where the richer classes may have set a bad example. There are other food matters, too, wherein the poor may have been lucky in not having the rich man's diet (but on the whole it is wiser to be rich).

Sugar illustrates a lot of things. It is very doubtful if we need it at all—that is, in the forms we get it, especially the “sweets” we suck. For ages it has been destroying our teeth at an absurdly early age. The really healthy peoples did not need toothbrushes: the nature of their food kept their teeth in their heads.

* * *

Most questions of food quality and food balance overlap with adulteration. Now there is nothing essentially new in this. For several hundred years, and especially for the last 150, there have been alarms about what millers or butchers or grocers or brewers have been putting into food or drink. Some of it may have been

just scare-mongering; and of course some people have in any case taken advantage of the scares to put something on the market advertised as "pure". However, throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, there have been enough criticisms from medical authorities for us to conclude that some of the alarm has been well founded.

Today, the cruder forms of adulteration may have been got rid of by the very thorough powers of inspection which the State has, under various Acts of Parliament. But newer kinds of adulteration have appeared, especially in the last twenty years or so. They may be roughly classified as (1) chemicals of various kinds used on the land and on vegetables and fruit, (2) drugs given to animals we are going to eat, (3) things added to food either to keep it fresh or (4) to give it flavour.

The first two things are supposed to be necessary to prevent pests and disease, though there are farmers who claim to do that without these chemicals. We cannot go into this here; but a question or two ought to be asked. If, as is the case, a growing number of scientists are suspicious of the effects on human health, are all of these things really necessary? And if they are necessary with our present ways of growing food and rearing animals, are those ways themselves necessary?

The processes involved in Class (3) may not be so open to criticism. But in so far as they are criticised, again the question arises, Why are they necessary? Here the answer seems pretty clear. They are necessary if we must live in huge cities and have much of our food brought from far-away lands.

Class (4) raises other questions for which we have no space here. But this fourth class of what are called "food additives" is probably more powerfully attacked at the present time than Class (3). On the whole thing, let us end these thoughts on food with two quotations. The first is from a popular daily newspaper:

"Today a taste of real butter, meat, eggs, or almost anything else is to people of mature years like a whiff from childhood" (*Daily Mail* editorial, 9/12/60).

The second is just a small part of warnings from leading Professors of Nutrition at a meeting of the "Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene" not long ago. One of them feared that many "additives" might cause cancer. Another spoke thus of the latest powers of commercial chemists to fake flavours:

"We may soon be eating pies, hamburgers, and sausages with every quality of the meat they should contain except the nutritional value" (*The Times*, 12/10/62).

As in many other things we have recorded, welfare has risen, but not without some falls as well. But for the fact that welfare is supposed to include health, it would be best to measure it only in money.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THERE are many things about the Welfare State and about welfare in general which are often praised by comparison with times past; and indeed much is praiseworthy. This book has tried to show what some of them are and especially to show that there is far more security today, at least so far as security is measured by money, in terms of "real income" from either wages or State assistance.

It need hardly be said that most of us are very lucky indeed by comparison with the starving millions in a large part of the world. It is often pointed out that their infant death rate is very high as compared with ours. We might indeed feel that millions of those children are lucky to die in infancy.

But we are also lucky beside millions in the other "affluent" countries. Even in the U.S.A., the richest country in the world, the Public Assistance of various kinds, with funds from insurance schemes or otherwise, is far less adequate than ours; and there is nothing corresponding to our "National Health Service".

* * *

There are also many things about our welfare which are often criticised or even condemned. We have looked

at some of them too. But, among those which we have barely touched, there are some which ought to be briefly mentioned; and they are all of them connected with each other.

The article in the *Daily Mail* which was quoted in Chapter Ten was, it so happens, headlined "Quantity or Quality?", and the rest of it mentioned other things besides food. It is an old tale. There is nothing new in the complaint that as more people have more things, or more of the same thing, the quality of many things goes down. In generation after generation, older people have been saying this, especially among those with plenty of money. Very likely they often seize on the things that have gone down in quality and forget the things which are greatly improved. All the same, there is a problem here, and we can see it by going back briefly to the subject of food.

If the *Daily Mail*, and many others, are at all right about the lower quality of food (and of other things too), why has it happened? Now the foods that most people buy are much cheaper today than they used to be—in this sense, that more real incomes (see Chapter Five) are high enough to get food and a lot of other things as well (that is, if you think of food as just something you buy when you are hungry). Unfortunately, things are so arranged that if you want high quality food—or high quality in most things—you will have to pay more for it and do without certain other things (unless, of course, you are rich). This is because mass-produced food, and mass-produced anything, saves

labour-time (see Chapter One), and a return to quality production would raise the price. Must this always be so? Whatever the answer is, it is a matter you may want to look into as you grow up; and you have every right to want to. Must so many things either be plentiful and perhaps bad or be good but scarce?

* * *

There is another question which is very closely connected with the question of quality; and many people ask it, because it has to do with the quality of life. It can be put in a number of ways, according to the side from which you approach it. Why must so many people go on working such long hours (with overtime) at work which is not interesting in itself, but interesting only as a means of getting money? If they become "redundant", owing to automation or other labour-saving inventions, why need unemployment mean less income and less security? For that is what has happened in America, where automation is far more developed than here. Why, getting really down to it, must most people work for money or else be dependent on State-aid or charity?

We have, especially in Chapter Four, stressed how new instruments of welfare have brought increased wealth and security. Must automation, the latest word in productivity, diminish security when the whole purpose of saving labour is to have more wealth? Isn't this rather absurd?

One answer, or a part of it, has been given by a highly respected American Professor of Economics, J. K.

Galbraith. He says the absurdity in this situation springs from our clinging to an idea which was necessary till recent times but is now a drag on progress (and he is far from the first to say this, though he sometimes seems to think he is). It is an idea that was necessary before the instruments of welfare had become so vast and varied and plentiful as they are now. It is the idea that if men need not work hard, and at work which is often very boring, they will just lie around and do nothing—or nothing good or useful. They will go soft.

Now neither Galbraith nor anyone is suggesting that no work for the common good is still necessary. Obviously, wealth-making cannot be left entirely to machines with no men to control them and to invent still better ones. What is suggested is that the vast majority of human beings are not naturally idle; therefore they can safely be given the means to have far more leisure time than now, in which to make their own work (and play). And the instruments of welfare are now capable of giving both leisure and security—if allowed to.

Professor Galbraith and others have also pointed out that half the things we buy, which are called our “standard of living”, are not really our choice. The producers of those things, that is to say the directors and managers of production, dictate what, and how much, we are supposed to need. They spend vast sums on badgering us to buy their goods and in making sure they don’t last too long. This is called “planned obsolescence”. And in order that more and more shall be

produced, we have to work to produce it—and to get the money to buy it. We are not allowed time to stop and think and choose and perhaps to make what we, as individuals, would like—unless we get the sack, when our choice becomes limited for a different reason.

* * *

Finally—and remembering that all these matters are connected—there is a problem which is more and more being aired among those in touch with industry at the point of production. Among those who talk or write about it, on the air or in books and papers, are the people employed by industry itself to try to maintain “good labour relations”. (Their jobs have some long names, such as “industrial psychologists”, “sociologists”, and so on.)

What is their problem? We have already said that much work is not interesting in itself. Why isn't it? A great part of the reason (though not all) is that it is not creative for the persons performing it. Dull, routine work is easy to put up with if it does not demand the greater part of one's working day. At the same time, work may be hard and may involve some drudgery—in fact, work with no drudgery at all may thus be boring!—so long as our imaginations are exercised in the doing of it.

Some of those who study animals (“zoologists” and “naturalists”) have observed that chimpanzees have enough imagination, in the wild state, to use natural objects as tools, if not quite to make tools. Similar

brain-power has been observed in elephants. Yet many human tasks now occupying eight or more hours a day need less imagination than that of chimps and jumbos!

This, say many of those who are paid to deal with "labour relations", explains a good deal of unofficial and "wildcat" strikes, especially where higher wages are not obviously needed. Unfortunately, wage demands are often the only hard and measurable form which frustration can take.

It is not for this book to suggest the answer to this and the other closely connected troubles, but only to record that the problems are there and are recognised by many whom they concern. They can hardly be ignored in any accounting of the growth and present condition of welfare.

APPENDICES

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The following suggestions are intended to provide additional reading material for those who are interested in the subject of the book. They are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to provide a starting point for further study.

The following are some of the books which have been consulted in the preparation of this book:

1. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

2. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

3. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

4. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

5. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

6. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

7. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

8. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

9. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

10. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

11. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

12. *History of the United States*, by James M. Smith, 1910.

APPENDIX I

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

One could compile an almost endless list of fictional titles whose background throws some light on the social conditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This list is therefore confined to factual books which should be available from your school or local library.

The Future of the Welfare State. David Marsh (Penguin 1964).

Social Reformers. N. Wymer (O.U.P. 1955).

Robert Owen. G. D. H. Cole (Macmillan 1930).

Lord Shaftesbury and Social and Industrial Progress.
J. Wesley Bready (Allen & Unwin 1926).

The Early Factory Legislation. M. W. Thomas (Thames Bank 1948).

Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry. Margaret Hewitt (Barrie & Rockliff 1958).

Pioneers of English Education. A. V. Judges, editor (Faber 1952).

A Short History of English Education. H. C. Barnard (U.L.P. 1947).

There is also the Jackdaw Series published by Jonathan Cape. These are most interesting collections

of contemporary documents. The following titles are relevant:

7. *Lord Shaftesbury and the Working Children.*
13. *The Coming of Steam.*
16. *The Vote, 1832-1928.*
17. *Peterloo and Radical Reform.*

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

With the help of this and other books, answer the following questions:

1. What do most people mean by "welfare"?
2. What does welfare mean to *you*? (Never mind most people if you are different.)
3. Was the Industrial Revolution necessary?
4. If so, was the way it happened inevitable?
5. From this and other books give the names of a few upper-class people and employers who were "humanitarians" and tried to remove some of the ill-fare caused by the Industrial Revolution. How did they try and how far successfully?
6. What were the chief ways in which the sufferers of ill-fare helped themselves?
7. Give, in brief outline, examples of the increasing ways in which the State began to help in (a) social security, (b) education, (c) some other matters of welfare.
8. Mention some of the problems, as indicated in this book, that worry Good Kind People at the present day. From what you hear at home or elsewhere, do you think those problems are serious? (If you don't think so, do not hesitate to say so.)

9. From your general reading and observation, what do you think the State is really in aid of? (Again, give *your* feelings, favourable or otherwise.)

And/or:

10. A German egg-head named Hegel called the State "the footstep of God on earth". A Russian nobleman called Kropotkin, and others of like mind, have seen it rather as a tool of the devil.

Do you think each of these views is a bit much?
If so, is there a middle way?

APPENDIX III

PROJECTS

1. Go to your Public Library. Ask the staff for reference books which will give you comparative figures of infant mortality and any other facts that interest you in this country, U.S.A., Russia, India.
2. Explaining why you want it, get from an office of the "Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance" (or Post Office if obtainable) or anyone who has them, the latest changes in Benefits and Pensions and Contributions. Then find parents or others willing to discuss them in plain English.
3. From the Booklist in this book and/or from other books known to you or your teachers, follow up anything in this book that particularly interests you and try to catch the author out if you can.
4. After reading the quotation from the *Daily Mail* in this book, Chapter Ten, p. 100, go out and try to find a place that sells "real butter, meat, eggs, or almost anything else" (or that says it does).
5. As soon as you feel strong or old enough, read two books of the late H. J. Massingham, *Wold Without End* and *The Faith of a Fieldsman*.

There is a reason for this. On the one hand, (a) Massingham was blind to the needs and forces behind the Industrial Revolution; (b) he largely

ignores the mean and miserable sides of country life before it. On the other hand, he is valuable as a champion of all that was good and green and healthy as compared with our asphalt and ferro-concrete deserts of today.

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